

MINUTES
GREEN BAY HOUSING AUTHORITY
Thursday, October 17, 2013, 10:30 a.m.
1424 Admiral Court, Second Floor Reading Room
Green Bay, WI 54303

MEMBERS PRESENT: W. VandeCastle, S. Popp, B. Goodlet

MEMBERS EXCUSED: D. Dolan-Wallace

OTHERS PRESENT: R. Strong, R. Hallet, S. Schmutzer, K. Vang

R. Strong communicated to the Authority that D. Dolan Wallace has resigned from the Authority.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. Approval of the September 19, 2013 minutes of the Green Bay Housing Authority

A motion was made by S. Popp and seconded by B. Goodlet to approve meeting minutes of September 19, 2013 as presented. Motion carried.

COMMUNICATIONS:

None

OLD BUSINESS:

2. Update and possible action on the status of the loan made to NeighborWorks® Green Bay for the Armory project

R. Hallet reported that NeighborWorks® was unable to attend this meeting but provided a written report indicating that the "Farmory" proposal (using the Armory for crop production) is proceeding as planned. They have applied for and received a \$15,000 Basic Needs Grant from the Basic Needs Giving Partnership. This grant allows them funding for further analysis and research on the feasibility of the project. If all goes well with this analysis, NeighborWorks® will apply for another grant to actually implement the project. They expect to provide a proposal no later than January 2014.

W. VandeCastle inquired if NeighborWorks® was continuing to pay interest on their loan. R. Hallet responded that yes, they pay interest annually when they renew their annual note.

S. Popp made a motion to accept and place on file and seconded by B. Goodlet. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

3. Approval to implement a smoke free policy effective June 1, 2014

W. VandeCastle inquired as to which properties this policy would apply to. R. Hallet responded that the policy is intended for both Mason Manor and Scattered Site properties. Enforcement of the policy at Scattered Sites will be more difficult, but it has been discussed with other housing authorities and it is feasible. Information from Clear Gains, a coalition that works to assist in the transition to smoke-free housing, was presented. Information presented included the benefits of the proposed policy, including cost savings on maintenance and cleaning, reduction in cleaning chemical and paint use, as well as decrease of fire danger/damage. Smoking-related fires are still the leading cause of fires in residential buildings, so the proposed policy would decrease this danger.

W. VandeCastle asked what the enforcement protocol of the policy would be. R. Hallet responded that the details are still being discussed, but one aspect of enforcement would be

not allowing “tattle-tailing”, as it breeds acrimony between residents. Enforcement would instead rely on witness and investigation of the act by staff. R. Hallet clarified that enforcement would be difficult in some cases, but the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

S. Schmutzer suggested there may be a “Three Strikes & You’re Out” enforcement procedure in place. R. Hallet responded that the details would be something along those lines but are still being worked out. S. Popp then asked which areas would be prohibited and which area would be designated, if smoking will be allowed outside the doors on GBHA property, etc. R. Hallet responded that there would be designated smoking areas. The recommended designated distance from doorways is 25 feet. Whether or not the smoking area would be designated to a particular area outside or anywhere beyond 25 feet from the door is still being considered. GBHA staff has been having discussions about providing a smoking shelter for residents use. This would better accommodate smokers during times of inclement weather. This is still being discussed with staff as there is a variable cost to constructing the shelter. W. VandeCastle stated that it might be more cost-effective to have a shelter, as residents would be less likely to open windows in their units and smoke, thus releasing heat and increasing heating costs.

S. Popp asked about the physical makeup of the structure, as to whether it would be totally enclosed or more reminiscent of a bus-stop shelter. R. Hallet responded that several options are being considered. The materials used as the walls of the structure are still being considered; glass, Plexiglas, and other materials are being discussed by staff. S. Popp expressed the opinion that the shelter should be open on one end in order to better facilitate air flow and let smoke out. Snow would have to be taken into consideration.

W. VandeCastle suggested that closable vent windows might better allow for protection against rain and weather. A hinged, downward-sloping vent would allow for opening and closing based on weather and amount of smoke.

S. Popp voiced concern that some residents use the activity of smoking as a stress release and a way to curb mental anxiety. R. Hallet stated that residents who smoke would still be welcome to live in GBHA properties, just that the activity of smoking would be relegated to designated outdoor areas.

R. Hallet directed attention to the benefits regarding a smoke-free policy, as detailed by Clear Gains. A smoke-free policy is legal; enforcement is allowed just as any other addendum to a lease. Historically such policies are popular with renters. 72% of renters in buildings that allow smoking, but keep their units smoke-free, would prefer that the building be non-smoking. 54% of renters are concerned with the effects of second-hand smoke from other units on their health. Clear Gains has many good resources available for implementing the policy. Staff determined that official announcement of the policy would be given to residents at the beginning of December 2013, thus giving the residents a full six months notice before the policy is implemented on June 1, 2014.

S. Popp inquired as to the number of lease renewals that fall within that 6-month period. R. Hallet responded that most of the renewals fall on June 1. S. Popp voiced concern that all residents be made aware of the impending change in policy with a long enough window of time.

A motion was made by W. VandeCastle and seconded by B. Goodlet to implement the non-smoking policy in GBHA properties effective June 1, 2014. It was clarified that the policy would apply to both Mason Manor and Scattered Sites properties. Motion carried.

W. VandeCastle asked that the policy be brought back to the Authority for review when it is finalized. The policy may need adjustment over time based on the effects of Mason Manor and Scattered Sites desirability to current and prospective residents.

S. Popp voiced the opinion that a smoke-free policy might create incentive for prospective residents who desire to live in a smoke-free environment. Additionally, GBHA staff needs to make sure they communicate the new policy clearly to current and prospective residents.

R. Hallet stated that based on advice by Housing Authorities who have already gone through this, residents would not be grandfathered in to the new smoking policy. In past cases, the practice of grandfathering in residents and allowing smoking in certain cases has led to hostility between residents and perceived unfairness.

4. Approval to seek bids for a blanket Mason Manor ramp repair contract

R. Hallet reported that the intention was to work with the Purchasing Department to develop a multi-year contract for the ramp repair. Aspects of the repair contract would include both the deck and the walls. Mason Manor's maintenance person estimates that the current cost of repairs to be between \$10,000 and \$15,000. Thereafter, repair cost would be approx \$5,000 per year. The walls could be repaired every other year, with an estimated cost of \$7,500.

W. VandeCastle asked what the current concerns were regarding the deck. R. Hallet responded that seasonal cracks form and worsen, causing the concrete to begin to shift. The longer a repair is delayed the more the damage increases and the higher the final repair costs. This is why GBHA's maintenance staff suggests yearly repairs as opposed to longer periods of time.

W. VandeCastle asked what constituted the specific concerns of the wall damage. R. Hallet responded that most of the concerns are aesthetic. The damage includes paint damage and fading.

A motion was made by S. Popp and seconded by W. VandeCastle to seek bids for a blanket Mason Manor ramp/wall repair contract.

5. Discussion and possible action regarding Congress's T-HUD Bill

R. Hallet outlined the basics of the stalled T-HUD Bill before Congress, stating it includes a total of \$28.5 billion for the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Of that, \$24.9 billion is included for Public and Indian Housing. Within that appropriation is funding for housing vouchers for fiscal year 2014. R. Hallet outlined direct action the Authority members could take in order to influence Wisconsin Representatives to pass the bill and provide access to this Federal funding, including sending form letters and emailing individual representatives. R. Hallet further explained that she found that the NAHRO website includes a section for legislative advocacy efforts, which includes a summary of a bill that is being considered, then an area where users can compose an email to their representative, using either a form letter email or modifying it as desired. This area of the NAHRO website does not seem to be password protected, so Authority members are encouraged to utilize it.

S. Popp pointed out that the T-HUD Bill also contained funding for transportation and included a veterans component. Because of this, multiple parties are dependent on the passage of this bill and the funding appropriations it represents.

W. VandeCastle suggested due to the deadlocked state of Congress, this information be placed on file and reviewed at the next meeting. At that time the GBHA could discuss the best time to send the letters to maximize impact. He suggested, as previously discussed,

that the Authority members send individual letters but one could also come from the Authority as a whole under the Authority's letterhead. It was agreed to wait until the bill was closer to a vote before the GBHA sent letters.

INFORMATIONAL:

The Authority sent their congratulations to N. Aderholdt for her new baby.

FINANCIAL REPORT AND BILLS:

S. Schmutzer reported that there was nothing out of the ordinary in the check listing. S. Popp inquired as to what Tenant Services constituted, as reported on the check detail as an account. K. Vang explained that this cost incorporated Mason Manor's Birthday Club and funding for various events for residents. S. Popp inquired what Tom's Tunes is, to which K. Vang explained he is the entertainment at tenant gatherings. She also inquired as to Tom Dennee's service and unit repair charges. R. Hallet responded that Mr. Dennee's services are used on a contractor basis.

W. VandeCastle made a motion to approve the bills, seconded by S. Popp. Motion carried.

S. Popp inquired as to what charges tenants pay for besides rent. R. Hallet responded that all utilities are included, except tenants pay for their own telephones, or if they have an extra freezer or an air conditioner.

S. Schmutzer referred to the financial summary page, pointing out that the reserve amounts are now indicated. She further stated that the GBHA had recently undergone an audit. There will be two items that will be on the audit report, one because there was a lack of control during the four-month period without a Senior Accountant, the other being a carryover from last year in Accounts Payable due to software complications. Reports will now be run monthly to alleviate this program. The audit found no evidence of fraud.

A motion was made by W. VandeCastle and seconded by B. Goodlet to receive and place on file. Motion carried.

STAFF REPORT:

6. Change in Commissioners

R. Hallet stated that they are looking for someone to replace D. Dolan-Wallace, preferably another architect. She also reported that a resident has expressed interest in joining the Authority to replace the recently resigned Resident Commissioner, Helen Genunzio. Final approval of this is the responsibility of the Mayor's Office. There would be a need for election of officers in the future.

7. Scattered Sites REAC Appeal submitted

R. Hallet reported that a REAC appeal had been submitted for Scattered Sites on October 3, 2013, which was at the beginning of the government shutdown. With that shutdown now over, the appeal process has resumed with HUD. R. Hallet determined that if the GBHA regains the points it had lost during the Scattered Sites inspection, the score would increase from 79 to 91.40. For Mason Manor, the score could potentially increase from 94 to 95.72.

8. Langan Investigations report for the month of September

R. Hallet reported that there were 16 housing applications and one new addition to households, eight for Mason Manor and eight for Scattered Sites. Thirteen applications were approved, three were denied due to criminal history. There is one currently undergoing fraud investigation.

R. Hallet inquired if the Authority found the monthly Langan reports useful. S. Popp and W. VandeCastle responded that they do.

W. VandeCastle made a motion to receive and place on file. Motion was seconded by S. Popp. Motion carried.

9. Occupancy Report

K. Vang reported on vacancies within the GBHA's units: At Mason Manor, apartments 817 and 420 were listed as vacancies, although 817 was a transfer. The resident is moving to a lower level. A resident is scheduled to move into 420 in November. Scattered Site vacancies included 415 North Maple, 913 North Chestnut, and 1121 University. By the end of November, all will be occupied. The tenant in 1337 University will be moving out in November, and the process of finding a new tenant has begun. Mason Manor had several upcoming vacancies, most due to residents transitioning to nursing homes. All vacancies are expected to be filled by January 2014. The average occupancy rate for Mason Manor is 97.17%, for Scattered Sites it is at 96%.

W. VandeCastle made a motion to accept the report and place on file. B. Goodlet seconded. Motion passed.

10. Introduction of Resident Services Coordinator

The Authority recognized and welcomed Ka Vang as the GBHA's new Resident Services Coordinator.

11. Introduction of Housing Intern

The Authority recognized Charles Androsky as the new Housing Intern.

W. VandeCastle inquired if the new intern would be working on Brown County fraud recovery activities. R. Hallet responded that because of the turnover of interns, the intern's duties would most likely not include fraud recovery. W. VandeCastle elaborated on BCHA investigations of housing voucher fraud. The BCHA has been able to use the TRIP program to recover some housing funds lost due to fraud.

12. Distribute Green Bay Neighborhood Guide to City Services

R. Hallet distributed the new third edition Green Bay Neighborhood Guides.

13. Optional tour of newly redecorated Mason Manor model apartment

R. Hallet explained the reason and option for the tour of the newly redecorated Mason Manor model apartment.

A motion was made by W. VandeCastle and seconded by S. Popp to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 11:35am.

ca:rah:jld